



# THE LAKE AND PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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November 25, 2003

By FAX: (907)269-4539

Roger Sampson, Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Education & Early Development  
801 West Tenth Street, Suite 200  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1894

Darroll Hargraves, Chair  
Local Boundary Commission  
550 West Seventh Avenue, Suite 1770  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3510

Dear Commissioner Sampson and Chair Hargraves:

I am writing in response to your letter requesting my opinion on school consolidation. While I appreciate the motivation of school consolidation to increase the efficiency of operations, I believe that school consolidation will not automatically lead to a higher level of student achievement or, in the long run, be more fiscally responsible. As is always the case with education, we must do what is right for our students; therefore I approach the topic of school consolidation with caution. Here are my views on the two points raised in your letter.

In regard to the administration of a district, I think it is a mistake to presume that combining two administrations will make operations more efficient. In particular, school consolidation that would include multi-sites, diverse cultural rural districts is counter-productive. In my district, it is a daily challenge for our administration to meet the students' needs at our fourteen schools since the distance between sites is great (no roads, only travel by small plane) and the cultural make-up is wide-ranging. I believe that increasing the size of my district would reduce efficiency, decrease productivity, diminish staff and student moral resulting in overall hindrance in providing education.

I recognize that the consolidation of administrations of two single site districts that are in proximity on a map may appear feasible and doable. However, I am apprehensive in making a recommendation that such consolidations occur without taking into account and allowing for the many seen and unseen variables (including cultural) of the two sites. I don't believe there is a "one size fits all" way to approach combining districts and administrations; it must be carefully considered on a case by case basis.

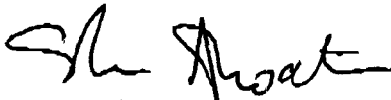
Chignik Bay • Chignik Lagoon • Chignik Lake • Egegik • Igiugig • Ivanof Bay • Kokhanok • Levelock  
Newhalen • Nondalton • Pedro Bay • Perryville • Pilot Point • Port Alsworth • Port Heiden

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If some form of school consolidation is mandated by the legislature, then Senator Wilken's second option, consolidation of school functions, should be explored as a way to reduce operating costs. Again, it is imperative that such a study includes the pending and long-range effects on student educational achievement. I know that all organizations strive to improve the efficiency of their operations and if shared services indicate improvement, then it should be considered. However, if shared services cause a school district's delivery of education to be diluted to the point of regression, then it is a serious mistake to pursue this option as it defeats the very purpose of education.

Knowing the cost of education continues to rise, I agree that it is appropriate to examine ways to save money and be more resourceful. However, it is wrong and detrimental to the future of our State and all its citizens, to view monetary efficiency as the bottom-line. We are not in the business of making money; there are no financial profits for a school district. The profit that a school district realizes is the success of its students. Any effort that undermines this chance for success should not be considered.

Sincerely,



Steve Atwater  
Superintendent

cc: Jeff Currier, Lake and Peninsula Borough Manager